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MUS 495.09: Human Values and the Aesthetic Experience

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Academic Misconduct and the Student Conduct Code

All students must practice academic honesty. Academic misconduct is subject to an academic penalty by the course instructor and/or disciplinary sanction by the University. All students need to be familiar with the Student Conduct Code. The Code is available for review online at www.umt.edu/SA/VP/SA/Index.cfm/page/1321.

Human Values and the Aesthetic Experience

Introduction

Looming over the glorious architecture, art, and music of Europe is one of the terrible tragedies of human history: The Holocaust. The course will center on this cataclysmic event when moral standards were reduced – its horror pleading for expression: “If there is a god, I will never forgive him.” – (These words were scrawled on a barrack’s wall in the Mauthausen Concentration Camp.)

Human Values and the Aesthetic Experience is the centerpiece of The Vienna Experience curriculum and thus, is a required course. After introducing theories of ethics (codes of behavior) and aesthetics (perceptions of beauty), the course investigates the intersection of the two and considers the influences one may have upon the other. More specifically, the course debates whether or not aesthetic experiences can affect a human being’s moral sense. This idea is not easy to discuss. That one can learn something of justice and goodness through artistic experience is controversial. But difficulties and controversies should not preclude investigation. There is much to say about these topics, and we can expect to consider a great deal about values and beauty from books, articles, films, music and the places we visit. Although I am the instructor, I come to this course as a student. I encourage each of you to approach this course as a teacher.

Course Details

CRN#	Course #	Title	Credits
Instructor			
33955	MUS 195	Human Values and the Aesthetic Experience	3 credits
Funk			
33965	MUS 495	Human Values and the Aesthetic Experience	3 credits
Funk			

The course has been submitted to The University of Montana’s academic policies committee (ASCRC) requesting approval as a General Education course fulfilling the Ethics requirement. If it is not approved, students have the option to petition the appropriate committee requesting permission for the course to serve as a General Education ethics course.

The course is offered under two numbers: MUS 195 and MUS 495. MUS 195 is a lower division course and MUS 495 is an upper division course. Students enrolled in the upper division course will be required to read more material and to write a third paper.

The class will meet on Thursdays from 7 to 9 p.m. (10 p.m.) in Music Room 205.

Expectations

Students are expected to come to class having studied the material assigned, to raise questions and search for answers in class discussions, and to attend all classes. In the case of illness or other factors beyond the student's control, students are advised to communicate with me prior to the absence. Because of the interactive nature of the class and the complexities of the topics being discussed, please arrange for someone in the class to record any class discussions that you may be forced to miss.

Grading

MUS 195	
Class Participation	50%
2 papers	50%
MUS 495	
Class Participation	50%
3 papers	50%

Attendance: Once a grade has been determined by considering the quality of class participation and the quality of the two-three papers, the semester grade for the course may be affected by attendance. Missing a 2 hour class means that you have accumulated 2 hours of absence. Each letter grade has three levels i.e., B+ B B-.

Grade is unaffected with 0-3 hours of absence.

Grade is dropped by 1/3 of a grade with 4 hours of absence i.e., A becomes A -; C+ becomes C

Grade is dropped by 2/3 of a grade with 5 hours of absence i.e. A becomes B+; C+ becomes C-

Grade is dropped by one full grade with 6 hours of absence i.e. A becomes B; C+ becomes D+

Grade is dropped by 1 1/3 grade with 7 hours of absence i.e. A becomes B-; C+ becomes D

Grade is dropped by 1 2/3 grade with 8 hours of absence i.e. A becomes C+; C+ becomes D- etc.

Papers

Students registered for MUS 195 are required to submit two papers. Students registered for MUS 495 are required to submit three papers.

Paper 1 (Due Wednesday, March 29, 2:00 p.m.): We have considered Antigone's decision to disobey the law mandated by Creon. We have observed the main characters in Schindler's List and Life is Beautiful rebelling in their own ways against the system in which they are forced to live. We have digested these circumstances against the backdrop of Plato's Republic in which he addresses the subject of justice. As you reflect on all of this, describe your sense of life as it relates to your understanding of the holocaust and how literature and film may or may not have led you to unshackle yourself as a prisoner in Plato's Cave?

Paper 2: (Due Wednesday, June 14, 2 p.m.) Plato first describes his Republic as the perfect city and then applies it analogously to the perfect soul. We have read that it is towards perfection that human beings aim their existence. By observing dignity in the perfection of supreme artistic creations, we may find dignity in ourselves and learn the difference between how life is often lived and how it ought to be lived. Using your experiences in Vienna and referring to what we've read and sung, defend or refute the following claim: The investigation of life as it is expressed through literature, film, art, and music helps us to answer the question "What is a good human being?"

Paper 3 (Due August 1) (MUS 495 students): Making direct reference to the writings of Plotinus, Rand and Santayana, discuss the role of popular culture (i.e., rock music, pop music, advertising, television, film, video games) in forming the values of a human being?

Because you may or not have access to a computer and printer in Vienna, papers may be handwritten but please write legibly. Recommended length: 6-8 pages handwritten; 3-4 pages typed, double-spaced, 12 pt. font. They may also be sent as a Word attachment to: sylvele@aol.com

Course Schedule

We will be reading and discussing relevant writings on ethics and aesthetics. In addition, we will view three films on the Holocaust. We will visit two concentration camps: Aushwitz-Birkenau in Poland and Mauthausen in Austria. Finally, we will rehearse and perform music related to the Holocaust. It is through the combination of all of this that we hope to gain a better understanding of the expressive power of the aesthetic experience to inform how human beings ought to behave.

Day	Date	Time	Activity
	Assignment		
Thursday	January 26	7 p.m.	Introduction/Read Antigone
Thursday	February 2	7-9 p.m.	Film: Antigone
Republic Bk. VII	(514a-517c)		Read
	"Allegory of		

				the	
Cave”					
Thursday Book I	February 9	7 p.m.	Discuss Antigone/Republic:	Read Republic	
Thursday Republic Book II	February 16	7-10 p.m.	“Allegory of the Cave” Film: Judgment at Nuremburg	Read	
Thursday Book III	February 23	7 p.m.	Discuss: Judgment/Republic I	Read Republic	
Thursday Republic Book IV	March 2	7-10 p.m.	Schindler’s List	Read	
Thursday 1	March 9	7 p.m.	Discuss Schindler/Republic II	Prepare Paper	
Thursday	March 16	7 p.m.	Discuss Republic III/IV		
Prepare Paper 1					
Thursday Frankl	March 23	7-9:30 p.m.	Life is Beautiful	Read	
(Continues in Vienna)					
Wednesday	March 29	2-3	Discuss Beauty in Vienna Submit Paper 1	Read Frankl	
Wednesday Frankl	April 5	2-3	Discuss Frankl	Read	
Wednesday on Auschwitz	April 12-13	TBA	Visit Auschwitz/Birkenau	Reflect	
Wednesday Santayana p. 3-33	April 19	2-3	Discuss Auschwitz/Birkenau	Read	
Wednesday Santayana p. 35-51	April 26	2-3	Discuss Santayana	Read	
Wednesday Rand Ch. 3	May 3	TBA (Italy)	Discuss Santayana	Read	
Wednesday Ch. 4	May 10	2-3	Discuss Rand Ch. 3	Read Rand	
Sunday Rand pp. 162-172	May 14	Afternoon	Visit Mauthausen	Read	
Read Rand Ch. 9	Wednesday	May 17	2-3	Discuss Mauthausen	
Wednesday The Academy	May 24	2-3	Discuss Rand	Read Funk:	
Wednesday Paper	May 31	2-3	Discuss The Academy	Work on Final	
Wednesday Paper	June 7	2-3	Final Reflections	Work on Final	
Wednesday	June 14	2-3	Final Reflections; Paper 2 submitted		

Students registered for MUS 495 are required to read three additional writings and to write a third paper: MUS 495 Readings:

Essential Plotinus "Beauty"	Plotinus
The Romantic Manifesto (Entire Book)	Rand
The Sense of Beauty (Part IV: Expression)	Santayana
August 1	Paper 3 submitted

On Ethics

Ludwig Wittgenstein wrote, "It is clear that ethics cannot be put into words....Ethics and aesthetics are one and the same." He made his point in a letter he wrote in 1919 to Ludwig Ficker regarding Wittgenstein's book, *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus*: "...My work consists of two parts: the one presented here plus all that I have not written. And it is precisely this second part that is the important one." (Part I of his book is about the world of reality, of facts; part II is about values.) (*Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus* 6. p. 421, trans. Pears and McGuinness)

Iris Murdoch writes, "Man feels the urge to run up against the limits of language....This running up against the limits of language is ethics....In ethics we are always making the attempt to say something that cannot be said, something that does not and never will touch the essence of the matter....But the inclination, the running up against something, indicates something." (*Metaphysics as a Guide to Morals*. p. 29. Penguin Putnam Inc., 1975)

Readings on Ethical Theory

Antigone*	Sophocles
Dover Thrift Edition, 1993	

Question: Is it ethical to adapt to the social good?

Republic* Books I-IV; Book VII, pp. 186-189 (514a-517c)	Plato
Translated by GMA Grube	
Hackett Publishing Co. 1992	

Question: In what ways is justice profitable?

On Aesthetics

The following is a paraphrase of an idea written by philosopher Suzanne Langer regarding aesthetics: Much of human experience is beyond discursive language....Art parallels the subjective in human experience, objectifies it and communicates its essence for perception. (*The Problems of Art*)

George Santayana wrote, "...it is the incommunicable and illusive excellence that haunts every beautiful thing..." (*The Sense of Beauty*. p. 9)

Readings on Aesthetic Theory

Essential Plotinus, "Beauty"*** (MUS 495 Students only)
1975

Plotinus

The Sense of Beauty*
Dover Publications, 1955

Santayana

Question: What is the nature of beauty and of what materials is it made?

The Romantic Manifesto*
Penguin Books, 1975

Ayn Rand

Question: What is the meaning of art in our lives?

On the Meeting of Ethics and Aesthetics

Even if ethics and aesthetics are beyond words, it does not bury the necessity to find a way to express something of our values and something about beauty. Even that which lies beyond language needs expression. Ayn Rand defines ethics as the "code of values to guide man's choice and actions." She continues, "Teaching is the task of ethics. Teaching is not the purpose of an art work.... (although) one can learn a great deal from an art work – about the nature of man, of his soul, of his existence. The primary value is that it give him the experience of living in a world where things are as they ought to be...successfully achieved...(a) realized immovable fact of reality – like a beacon – raised over the dark crossroads of the world, saying: "This is possible." (The Romantic Manifesto. Ayn Rand. p. 169-70)

Literature, Film and Music on Human Values and the Aesthetic Experience

Literature

Declaring Chapter 15: The Academy*
Funk/Gary Funk
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Eric

Man's Search for Meaning*

V. Frankl

Mein Kampf** Chapter 2: "Years of Study and Suffering in Vienna"
(MUS 495 Students)

A. Hitler

Can one live after Auschwitz? "Education after Auschwitz"***
Stanford University Press, 2003 (MUS 495 Students)

T. Adorno

Film

Judgment at Nuremberg
Schindler's List
Life is Beautiful

Film
Film
Film

Music***

Wislo Moja, Wislo Szara
Something like a Smile
Akhmatova/E. Funk
Friede auf Erden (Peace on Earth)

H. Górecki
A.

A. Schönberg

*Required books.

** MUS 495 students are required to read these in addition to the material required for the MUS 195 students.

***Those students enrolled in the Advanced Score Study course will also have the opportunity to study Shostakovich's Symphony No. 9 which was commissioned by the Soviet Union to commemorate the USSR's victory over Germany at the end of WWII. A composition by Hindemith, Mathis der Maler, was first performed in 1941. Hindemith's music was denounced by the Nazi Party Propaganda Minister Goebbels who called Hindemith's work "degenerate."

Other Recommended Readings

Nicomachean Ethics
Prentice Hall, 1962

Aristotle

Plato and the Republic
Pappas
Routledge, 2003

Nickolas

Foundations of the Metaphysics of Morals
Trans. Lewis Whitebeck
Prentice Hall, 1997

E. Kant

Utilitarianism
Mill
Prentice-Hall, 1957

John Stuart

Problems of Art

S. Langer

Culture and Value
Wittgenstein
Basil Blackwell Ltd., Oxford, 1980

L.

Ludwig Wittgenstein and the Vienna Circle
1979

ed. McGuinness

Traticus Logico-Philosophicus
Wittgenstein
Trans. Ogden, 1922
Trans. Pears and McGuinness, 1961

L.

The Abolition of Man
MacMillan Publishing Co., 1973

C.S. Lewis

Night

E. Wiesel

Website References

classics.mit.edu/sophocles/antigone.html
ablemedia.com/ctcweb/netshots/antigone/html
temple.edu/classics/antigone/html
lacan.org/antigone/html
fcit.usf.edu/HOLOCAUST/arts/artvicti.htm
fcit.usf.edu/HOLOCAUST/resource/gallery/
www.wiesenthal.com